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The NPS Student

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THE NPS STUDENT

by Ginger Werz-Petricka

The NPS has come a long way in 75 years, and if you look at the last page in this year's Annual Report, you can see that a lot of NPS students have come a long way, too.

In 1909 ten Naval Officers studied Marine Engineering under one professor. As of March this year, this is how the student body stacked up; Navy-931, Army-177, Air Force-98, Marine-79, Coast Guard-32, Department of Defense-24, International Students-291, and from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration-6, all fitting somewhere into twenty different programs.

Who is the NPS student? As we can see, his background is varied, but, according to many of the people I spoke with, there is much that each student has in common with his classmates.

The NPS student is upwardly mobile. It's true that every Naval Officer has an opportunity to attend the school, being considered for the first time in their third year of commissioned service. Each officer is considered in his sixth and ninth year also. But, obviously, there is more to being admitted to the school than random selection. Nine months before an officer is eligible for attendance to the school he is assigned a three-digit Academic Profile Code. The first digit of the code reflects the officer's college GPA, the second is for math grades and the third is for technical courses he has completed. The lower the code is, the better it is. Another major part of the selection process for the school is overall military, or job, performance. The other branches of the services have their own methods of selecting officers for postgraduate education, and the civilian students are nominated by their agencies, but once a person has been selected for possible assignment to the school, the process is the same. An APC is formulated and job performance is scrutinized.



The NPS student may be said to be a more serious student than most, being older, usually with a family and with strong career goals. Dean Schradly remarked that the high caliber of the student body is also a plus in attracting faculty members to the school.

Being a family member puts more responsibility on a student than might be found in a lot of civilian schools. Not only are the curriculums different, but, usually a major family move is involved. Both Prof. Layton of the Aeronautical

(Con't. pg. 46)

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(Students, con't. from pg. 33)

Engineering department and Prof. Sheingold of Electrical Engineering were students at the school in 1951, when the move from Annapolis was made.

La Mesa housing was just being built in 1951, and many horror stories circulated the Annapolis campus about the housing problem in Monterey. Some people even feared that they'd have to live in San Jose and commute to school. Prof. Layton bought a house in what is now Del Rey Oaks, sight unseen, from an enterprising Monterey realtor who had flown out to Annapolis. The school closed down at Thanksgiving, 1951, for the move, and after four weeks of field trips and the Christmas vacation he and his family arrived at their now home. They were pleased to find that they had one of the only houses on the street where they could park their car without putting a brick behind the wheel to keep it from rolling into the street. They weren't pleased to find out that after a week of waiting for their household goods their moving van was still sitting in front of their old house in Annapolis. I related this story to a friend of mine who lives in La Mesa now. Her wry remark was that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Prof. Sheingold related another story of a group of NPS students who, after the school closed in 1951 came out to Monterey and had a group of apartment buildings built at the mouth of Carmel Valley on property next to where the Holiday Inn is today. The apartments were a co-op and units were sold to incoming students as others rotated.

As we all know, the thesis is a big part of the NPS students concern. All thesis material is researched for originality and registered with the Library of Congress. For a masters thesis, the guidelines are not as strict as a doctoral thesis where the subject matter must be entirely original, but in the highly technical and ever changing fields of study at the NPS, new ground is always being broken. In

(Con't. on p. 49)

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(Students, con't. from pg. 46)

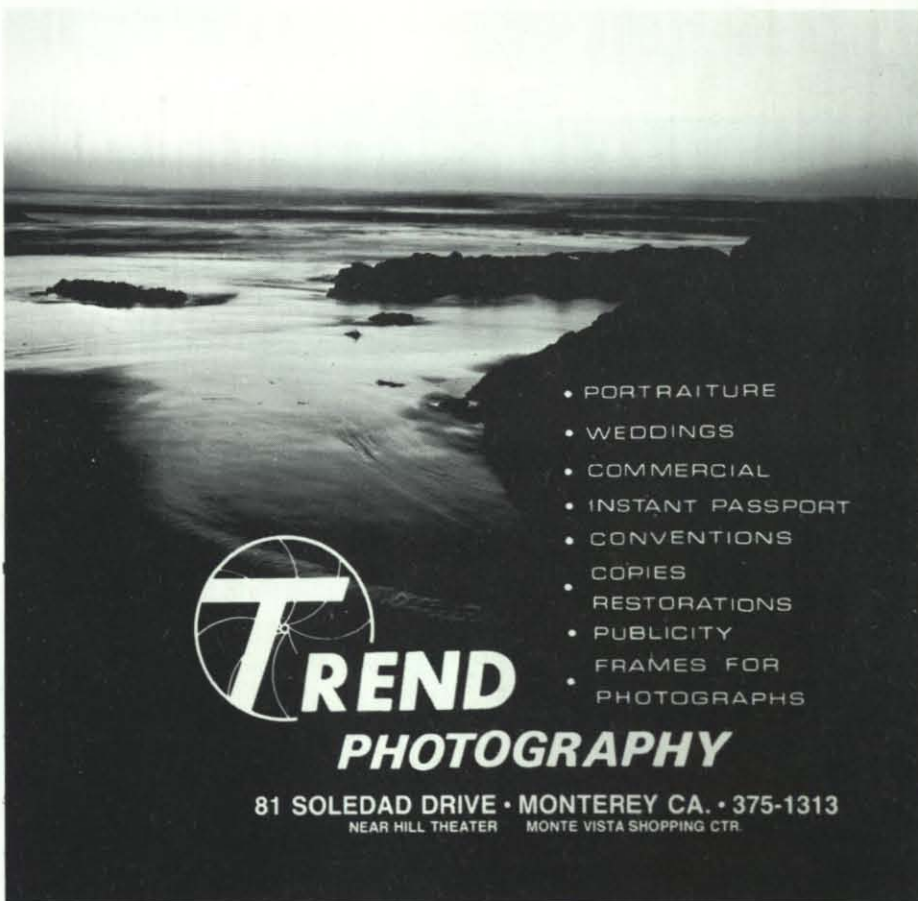
every discipline, students are working on real-life subjects with both the military and civilian sectors very interested in their results. A recent graduate, LCDR Ronald Hargrave converted the handbook of the A-6 Aircraft onto a hand-held computer, and now that he is stationed with the Naval Air Systems Command, he may well be able to implement his idea. All thesis material, when completed, goes to the Defense

Technical Information Service where civilian companies routinely review subject matter and write the school for further information. The NPS students can be proud of their contributions to their services.

Some students achieve recognition for deeds out of the ordinary. Robert Truax, who attended the school at Annapolis, is now running a private rocket service here in California, for a fee you can experience a truly memorable ride. Mr. Truax was president of the American Rocket Society when he was a student at NPS, and is also known for having designed the rocket motorcycle, which did not quite carry Evel Knievel over the Snake River.

In the late 60's another memorable student came to NPS, LCDR Frank Ellis, a Navy pilot who had lost both his legs in an aircraft accident. Refusing an early retirement, he learned to walk on the padded stumps of his legs. Later, he ran an obstacle course on artificial legs and parachuted out of an airplane. He attended NPS where he majored in Structures and wrote his thesis on the structure of the leg. While he was at the school, he rode a bicycle to class, played softball with his children and swam. He also wrote a book, "No Man Walks Alone" and has worked with handicapped children. Although, LCDR Ellis never realized his dream of returning to Group 1 flight status, he never quit trying, even applying for the astronaut training program. He eventually retired and carried his drive into a highly successful insurance career.

In its 75 year history, thousands of officers have graduated from NPS, and there is a story somewhere about each of them and their families. As almost every student I talked to pointed out, to go back to school after often a decade out of college has been both a painful and ultimately rewarding experience. The NPS is a unique establishment, both in the academic and military establishments. □



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